

Making Microsoft Word Documents Accessible

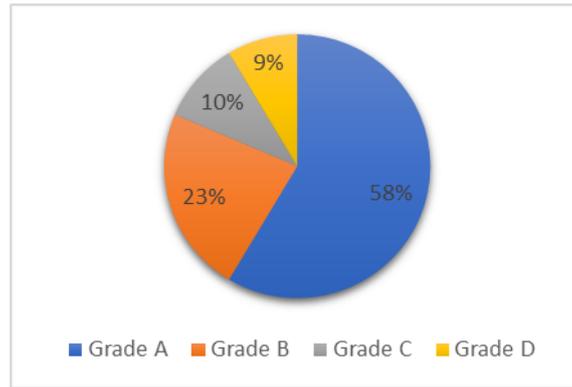
Good use of Microsoft Word [Styles, headings and specific formatting](#) rather than TAB, Spacebar and Enter keys to present a document make it much easier for a screen reader user or someone requiring Braille or using other [assistive technologies](#) to work with your learning materials. Text to speech (where content is read aloud) and careful use of colour can also help those with specific learning difficulties and colour deficiencies. All this can also make it easier for you to convert documents into accessible PDFs or Web Pages. If you are using Office 2013/2016 and need to make a file backward compatible, use save as a .doc or .rtf as these formats can also be read in many other applications such as Open Office.

Considerations

- ✓ **Use Styles.** Create headings and subheadings (Heading 1, 2, 3 etc.) using styles, not just bolded, enlarged or centred text. Using headings in a document allows you to create a DAISY digital talking book that is divided into sections; these sections can be navigated by the reader. If you would like to change the appearance of a heading, select Format > Styles and Formatting (Format > Style in Mac). This will change the appearance of all instances of a certain element (e.g. every Heading 1). Make sure Fonts used are readable, preferably size 12/14
- ✓ **Use picture descriptions.** These are sometimes referred to as 'alt tags' (alternative text) for all graphics including graphs and clip art. Insert the image – Select the image, then Format Picture (or select Format > Picture from the menu bar), use the size menu > alt text tab. Make sure the text is short but conveys meaning. [Microsoft Office support has screen grabs and more information.](#)
- ✓ **Make sure all tables have headers** across the top. If you have one row across the top, you can set this row as a header by selecting the table and choosing Table > Table Properties > Row tab > Repeat as Header Row at the top of each page. Tables should have a uniform structure with no merged cells as these can upset the reading order for someone using a screen reader. Table row and column titles should be concise and if possible provide a summary of important elements. Avoid using tables for layout.
- ✓ **If equations are being included** the MS Word equation editor will not produce screen reader accessible data. Read the flexible format guidance provided by the University of Bath and download the [MathType plugin](#) to create accessible equations.

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

- ✓ **Ensure good colour contrast** within charts and images and for text, if this is important for explaining items. Check this by printing out in black and white.



- ✓ **Do not forget page** numbers and create bulleted or numbered lists using the menu button and built in styles not just symbols and spaces.
- ✓ **Use [Office Accessibility Checker](#)** to find and fix the elements within your document that are not accessible. This can be found under File > Check for Issues.

Additional Resources

- Microsoft '[Make your Word Documents Accessible](#)'
- [10 very basic rules for making a Word document will look good](#) and make good Braille, Large Print, DAISY, PDF etc. More in depth use of style sheets.
- [WebAIM - Microsoft Word Accessibility Techniques](#) with useful screen grabs showing how each element is achieved:
- [Find and fix Accessibility issues in Word 2016](#) - Microsoft video and guide
- [I don't have Microsoft Office on my Computer!](#) - but I need to view and edit file.
- Check your work by downloading the free text to speech plug in called [WordTalk](#) or using the free downloadable [NVDA screen reader](#). Try navigating around your document using just the keyboard!
- [Using the Save as Daisy add-in for Word](#) so that documents can be used with [Daisy Players](#).